

# SENTENCE SENSE

"A GRAMMATICALLY INDEPENDENT GROUP OF WORDS THAT EXPRESS A COMPLETE THOUGHT"



## SUBJECT AND PREDICATE

Every complete sentence contains two parts: a subject and a predicate.

The **subject** is *what (or whom)* the sentence is about. This is a noun, pronoun, or any modifier of the noun or pronoun.


*Christopher has played soccer for three years.*

The **predicate** *tells* something about the subject by making a statement, asking a question, or telling it what to do. It consists of a verb or verb phrase and all its modifiers, objects, and complements.

*Stevie sleeps an average of twelve hours a day.*

## OBJECTS AND COMPLEMENTS

A verb may be followed by an object that completes the verb's meaning.


 The receiver of the action verb is the direct object. To determine if a verb has a **direct object**, isolate the verb and make it into a question by placing "*whom?*" or "*what?*" after it.

*Timothy opened the trunk.*

*The class did an experiment.*

A subjective **complement** completes the meaning of a linking verb and names the same person, place, or thing as the subject.

Linking verbs connect, or link the complement to the subject.

 *Linking verbs = be, is, are, was, were, am*

## PHRASES

A **phrase** is a word group that has no subject or predicate. It cannot express a complete thought by itself.

✓ **Prepositional Phrases** consist of a preposition, its object, and modifiers of the object. They function as adverbs or adjectives, and occasionally as nouns.

*He is a man of action. (adjective)*

*She came early in the morning. (adverb)*

✓ **Verbal Phrases** consist of a verbal with its objects, complements, and modifiers. A verbal is a word derived from a verb (to see, seeing).

*I prefer to believe him. (verb)*

*Swimming in the Atlantic is refreshing.*

*Before breakfast is too early. (noun)*

▪ **Infinitive Phrases** consist of an infinitive (to + base form: to see, to earn), its modifiers, and/or its object. They function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

*I wanted to buy the house.*

▪ **Participial phrases** consist of a present or past participle, its modifiers, and/or its object. They always function as adjectives describing nouns or pronouns.

*The man walking his dog is my father.  
Covered with ice, the road was dangerous.*

- **Gerund Phrases** consist of present participle, its modifiers, and/or its object. They always function as nouns, either as subjects or objects.

*She earned extra money by working overtime.*

*He hated living alone.*

- ✓ **Absolute Phrases** consist of a noun or pronoun and a participle. They modify an entire sentence.

*The whole family sat silently, their eyes glued to the TV screen.*

### CLAUSES

A **clause** is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate.

- ✓ A **Independent Clause** has both subject and verb. By itself, it can stand as a simple sentence.

*Eagles are beautiful.*

- ✓ **Dependent Clauses** express ideas that are dependent on the idea expressed in the main clause. They are introduced by a subordinating conjunction (as, since, because, etc.) or by a relative pronoun (who, which, that).

*Eagles are beautiful when they soar high above the cliffs.*

- ✎ An **adjective clause** modifies a noun or pronoun. It begins with a relative pronoun that serves as the subject or object.

*Anyone who is tired may leave.*

- ✎ An **adverb clause** explains when, where, why, how, or with what result. It can modify a verb, adjective, or a whole main clause.

*My head feels sore where I bumped it.*



A **noun clause** functions as a noun. It may serve as subject, predicate, noun, object of a verb, or object of a preposition.

*What you need is a vacation.*

### MODIFIER

A **modifier** is a word or group of words used to limit, qualify, or otherwise describe the meaning of another word or word group. Adjectives, adverbs, prepositional and verbal phrases, and subordinate clauses are the usual modifiers in English.

➔ Be careful to avoid MISPLACED MODIFIERS—modifiers that are positioned so that they appear to modify at the wrong thing.

*It is important that you place the modifying words, phrases, or clauses as close as possible to the word or words it modifies.*

- ✓ **Squinting Modifiers** can modify either the word before it or the word after it.
- ✓ **Split Infinitives** occur when a word is inserted between the “to” and the verb of an infinitive.
- ✓ **Dangling Modifier** has nothing to modify because the word it would logically modify is not present in the sentence.